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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 8825  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 4732  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 3415  
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SUBJECT: DETAINED LAWYERS RELEASED AND DETAINED AGAIN

REF: ISLAMABAD 481

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) Summary: On February 2, days after they were released from 90 days of house arrest, Aitzaz Ahsan, Supreme Court Bar Association President; retired Justice Tariq Mehmood, a Supreme Court lawyer; and Ali Ahmed Kurd, Supreme Court lawyer and National Assembly candidate, were placed back under house arrest in Lahore, Islamabad, and Quetta, respectively. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On February 2, the government of Punjab detained Supreme Court Bar Association president Aitzaz Ahsan for another 30-day period in Lahore after he was stopped at the airport on his way to Sindh to visit the grave of Benazir Bhutto. This detention came shortly after Aitzaz's address to a crowd of lawyers, calling for the resignation of President Musharraf, and two days after his release from his 90-day house arrest following the proclamation of emergency on November 3. According to a statement from Aitzaz, he has also been banned through a restraining order from entering Sindh province. (As critical of Musharraf as Aitzaz is, he has also spoken publicly against the USG and the policies implemented in Pakistan.)

¶3. (U) Retired Justice Tariq Mehmood was placed under "preventive custody" on February 2, one day after he was also released from a 90-day detention following the November 3 emergency. Under orders of the Islamabad administration, police were deployed to his home to pre-empt Mehmood's alleged plans "to create unrest in the capital." According to the order served on Mehmood, the government claimed that he had established contacts with individuals who intended to hold gatherings in violation of the law and that his "presence" would invoke a threat to the maintenance of law and order.

¶4. (U) On January 31, Supreme Court lawyer and National Assembly candidate, Ali Ahmed Kurd, was released from his 90-day detention at his home in Quetta. According to a local sources, Kurd was to travel to Lahore after his release to address the various Punjab bar associations and to meet with Nawaz Sharif, but he was also stopped by police at the airport and served with another 30-day extension to his detainment. From his home again in Quetta, Kurd told the media that the lawyers' movement will not back down.

¶5. (C) Comment: Post is working with SCA/PD on a statement from Washington condemning this renewed detention and will

follow up with the GOP to protest yet another  
counter-productive action.

PATTERSON